

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 03422 042158Z
ACTION ARA-14

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P R 042036Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO USCOMSOLANT PRIORITY
INFO CNO WASHDC
CINCLANTFLT NORFOLK VA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ
COMUSNAVSO FT AMADOR CZ
SECSTATE WASHDC 5596

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 3422

FROM: COMUSMILGP/NAVSEC

E.O. 11652: GDS - 83
SUBJECT: UNITAS XIX PLANNING (U)

REF: A. AMEMB BUENOS AIRES 3374, DTG 031914Z APR 78
B. USCOMSOLANT 271940Z APR 78

1. REF A WAS PASSED AS REQUESTED BY THE ARGENTINE NAVY WHO EXPRESSED A STRONG DESIRE FOR "ALL PLAYERS TO BE AWARE OF THE FULL SITUATION." THE REQUEST FOR THE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION IN REF A CAME AFTER LONG DISCUSSIONS WITH VICE-ADMIRAL TORTI (OP-03), REAR ADMIRAL CASAS (ONI) AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THEIR STAFFS. CHNAVSEC TRIED TO PERSUADE THE ARGENTINE NAVY TO GO ALONG WITH THE SPIRIT OF REF A AND TO CARRY OUT ANY EXERCISES/OPERATIONS DESIRED WITHOUT INCLUDING USHUAIA. THE ARGENTINE NAVY'S REACTION WAS ESSENTIALLY NEGATIVE. THEY SAY THEY ARE UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE RELUCTANCE OF US UNITS TO VISIT USHUAIA AND CLAIM THAT:

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 03422 042158Z

A. THE BEAGLE CHANNEL IS NOT AND WAS NEVER IN QUESTION OR IN DISPUTE BETWEEN CHILE AND ARGENTINA. REF A WAS PROVIDED BY THEM TO SUPPORT THIS CLAIM.

B. ALL PLANNED UNITAS XIX OPERATIONS WILL TERMINATE OUTSIDE ALL WATERS WHICH COULD BE CONSIDERED PART OF THE CONTROVERSY. THE SHIPS WILL ONLY TRANSIT THESE WATERS

ENROUTE THE BEAGLE CHANNEL WHERE ARGNAV PILOTS WILL BOARD SHIPS. (FYI, ARGENTINE PILOTS ARE USED BY SHIPS OF ALL NATIONS ON EAST-WEST PASSAGES; CHILEAN PILOTS ARE USED ON WEST-EAST PASSAGES AS AGREED UPON BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND CHILE.)

C. THE VISIT TO USHUAIA IS STRICTLY A PORT VISIT FOR A CRITIQUE AND PORT ACTIVITIES AND HAS NO POLITICAL CONNOTATIONS.

D. IN PREVIOUS UNITAS EXERCISES, USN DESTROYERS HAVE VISITED PUERTO WILLIAMS FOR REFUELING. THESE VISITS WERE MADE WHILE THE BEAGLE CHANNEL ISLANDS WERE STILL IN DISPUTE AND WITHOUT ARGENTINE PROTESTS.

2. VADM TORTI AND STAFF HAVE INTIMATED WITHDRAWAL FROM UNITAS XIX AND FROM PLANNING CONFERENCE IF USHUAIA NOT INCLUDED BUT HAVE NOT CLEARLY STATED THIS FACT.

3. STRONGLY RECOMMEND REVIEW DECISION NOT TO VISIT USHUAIA WITH REF A AND THIS MESSAGE IN MIND AND ADVISE.

4. AMBASSADOR'S COMMENTS:
I AM AT A LOSS TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE CALL AT USHUAIA BECAME A CONTROVERSIAL POINT. EMBASSY SANTIAGO
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BUENOS 03422 042158Z

HAS NEVER INFORMED US THAT THE CHILEAN NAVY FELT THIS WOULD BE THE CASE, AND UNITAS HAS CALLED PREVIOUSLY AT A PORT IN THE REGION AND APPARENTLY THE DISPUTE DID NOT EFFECT PLANNING AT THAT TIME. IT IS HARD FOR ME TO BELIEVE THAT THE ARGENTINES ARE TRYING TO USE THIS VISIT TO USHUAIA AS EVIDENCE OF A TILT BY THE USG IN FAVOR OF THE GOA. IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT THEY ARE PROBING TO SEE IF BY REFUSING TO VISIT USHUAIA WE ARE TILTING TOWARD CHILE. SO FAR AS I CAN SEE THERE IS NO PRACTICAL REASON AGAINST THE VISIT TO USHUAIA, AND A POLITICAL REASON EXISTS ONLY IF WE CHOOSE TO GIVE A POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE TO A MILITARY EXERCISE WHICH WE HAVE TRIED FOR SO MANY YEARS TO KEEP ON A PURELY MILITARY PLANE. UNLESS EMBASSY SANTIAGO HAS SUBSTANTIALLY MORE HARD INFORMATION THAN WE HAVE SEEN TO DATE, I BELIEVE THAT THE USHUAIA VISIT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE UNITAS SCHEDULE.
CASTRO

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